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THE NEW FEDERAL SEED ACT  
(Labeling and Advertising)

Broadcast by Wallace L. Kadderly, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Radio Service, and W. A. Davidson, Agricultural Marketing Service, in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Thursday, February 29, 1940, over 92 stations associated with the NBC Blue Network

KADDERLY:

From Washington we bring you more information about the new Federal Seed Act -- and Gove Hambridge will review some of the information in the 1939 Yearbook of Agriculture on feeding poultry.

Early this month W. A. Davidson of the Agricultural Marketing Service explained some of the provisions of the New Federal Seed Act that went into effect February 5. He is the man who is in charge of the administration of the Seed Act.

Mr. Davidson is here today to develop a point that he merely touched upon the last time he met with us --- and that point is: how the new Seed Act will make it possible for the buyer to obtain better seed.

All right, Mr. Davidson - - - how?

DAVIDSON:

One of the ways it should do this is through the greater care that must now be taken in the labeling as to varieties.

Agricultural Experiment Stations are doing a lot to produce better varieties of seeds for the conditions which prevail in their States. The planting of varieties adapted to local conditions is very important. Now most varieties of seed cannot be distinguished from other varieties of the same crop by just looking at the seed. We refer to seeds in those cases as being "indistinguishable". In order for dealers to sell seeds under the proper variety name, it is necessary for them to get information from the producer of the seed as to its variety.

The new Seed Act has provided for this by requiring dealers to obtain a declaration from the producer of the seed as to the variety name.

KADDERLY:

Under this requirement the farmer who produces seed for sale assumes a lot more responsibility than he had before.

DAVIDSON:

Yes, this is true ---and this is necessary so the farmer-consumer in another locality can be sure he is buying the variety named on the label. Any progressive farmer knows that he cannot just go out and buy corn, wheat or cotton. He has to have the variety of corn or wheat or cotton that will be best in his community, and as I pointed out, many of these varieties cannot be told from one another by just looking at the seed.

KADDERLY:

This means the producer of the seed will have to know the true variety of the seed he produces if he is to sign a declaration of variety.

DAVIDSON:

Yes --- and if he makes a false declaration he will be violating the Act just as much as when a seedsman misbrands his seed. This may be true even though the producer himself does not ship the seed into another State.

KADDERLY:

Mr. Davidson....let me get this straight.

As I understand it, a producer of seed is not compelled to put a variety name on seed that he is going to sell. However, if he wants to sell seed under a variety name then he does have to be sure that this seed is actually of the variety specified.

DAVIDSON:

That is correct.

KADDERLY:

Now let's take the case of a farmer who buys seed this spring and plants it expecting to sell seed from this crop next fall under a variety name. In that case he should be very sure that the seed he buys this spring is labelled as to variety.

DAVIDSON:

By all means. Furthermore, I would suggest that he buy this seed from a source that he knows to be reliable.

KADDERLY:

That leads us squarely into the question of truthful advertising. Let's talk about that for a minute or so.

DAVIDSON:

That's a good idea.

This is the time of year when farmers begin hearing spurious claims about new sensational varieties of crops. I have seen a great many of these so-called sensational varieties come and go in the last 15 years. Here are two examples of these spurious claims: a variety of cotton advertised in recent years to produce 2 inch staple and to yield up to 10 bales per acre; and a variety of oats that was advertised as a cross between sweetclover and oats. The advertising usually used in cases like these contains testimonials of doubtful value.

KADDERLY:

Of course, false advertising in interstate commerce, through the mail or by any other means, is prohibited by the new law, but how are farmers to know whether these sensational claims are true or false?

DAVIDSON:

Well, the best suggestion I can make is to check them with recommendations of the State agricultural experiment station. We are going to do everything we can to control false advertising in interstate commerce under the Federal Seed Act. False claims will reach our attention more promptly if prospective buyers would report the facts to their State experiment station or State Department of Agriculture if the claims seem unreasonable. And another thing to remember is this: reliable dealers confine their sales to approved varieties and sell them under the proper name.

KADDERLY:

Mr. Davidson, I'm sure many producers of seeds....also buyers of seeds, will have questions about the new Seed Act that haven't been answered here.

What material do you have available for distribution to people who want more information?

DAVIDSON:

We have proposed forms for labels, proposed forms for declarations, and a circular explaining the Act. These are available in mimeograph form.

KADDERLY:

(ad lib offer of these materials)

